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(54) **Novel oil blend compositions**

(57) The present invention is directed to novel oil blends suitable for use in edible products. More specifically, the invention is directed to oil blends including palm kernel oil, hydrogenated palm kernel oil, palm kernel stearin and hydrogenated palm kernel stearin. The oil blend compositions of the present invention have a flavor release and texture properties similar to those of cocoa butter. They are particularly useful as cocoa butter substitutes in edible food products such as confectionery products and chocolate alternative compositions. Also disclosed are edible food products, such as confectionery products and chocolate alternative compositions, made from these palm kernel oil blends.

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Description

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 [0001] The present invention is directed to novel oil blends suitable for use in edible products. More specifically, the invention is directed to oil blends including palm kernel oil, hydrogenated palm kernel oil, palm kernel stearin and hydrogenated palm kernel stearin. The oil blend compositions of the present invention have a flavor release and texture properties similar to those of cocoa butter. They are particularly useful as cocoa butter substitutes in edible food products such as confectionery products and chocolate alternative compositions.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 [0002] Cocoa butter is a widely used and much appreciated fat composition produced from cocoa beans. Cocoa butter is used for its flavor and texture properties in a variety of edible products, particularly in combination with sugars and other ingredients to make chocolate. The desirability of the characteristic cocoa butter flavor and texture have long assured a strong demand for cocoa butter and products which are made from cocoa butter. The worldwide cocoa bean supply, however, suffers from significant variability, due to constant and often unpredictable changes in the ability of different cocoa bean supplying regions to deliver enough beans at a consistent price and quality to meet the demand.

15 [0003] The uncertain availability of cocoa beans and the associated fluctuations in price have led to much effort to formulate alternative fat compositions which can be used in place of or in conjunction with natural cocoa butter. These alternative fats are generally classified into three types, based on their chemical composition and compatibility with cocoa butter. Cocoa butter equivalents (CBE) are fats which have chemical and physical properties compatible with cocoa butter, and can be used to supplement cocoa butter in confectionery products. Cocoa butter substitutes (CBS) are generally lauric fats which are incompatible with cocoa butter. Cocoa butter replacers (CBR) are partially compatible with cocoa butter. CBRs are primarily non-lauric fats which have properties intermediate those of CBEs and CBSs, and are sometimes referred to as non-lauric cocoa butter substitutes. Detailed discussions of these different types of alternative fats can be found in a variety of sources; see, for example, Traitler, H. et al., *Journal of the American Oil Chemist Society*, 62(2), 417-21 (1985); Shukla, V., in *Developments in Oils and Fats*, 66-94 (1995); Berger, K., *Food Technology*, 40(9), 72-79 (1986), the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference. Among these three principal types of alternative fats, cocoa butter equivalents are relatively more expensive, while cocoa butter substitutes are relatively less expensive. Typically, cocoa butter substitutes cost only one-third to one-fourth as much as cocoa butter, making products which use these alternative fats economically especially attractive to consumers.

20 [0004] One particular area in which cocoa butter substitutes are widely used is in compound coatings for confectionery products. In fact, most of the compound coatings now used in commercial confectionery are made of these cocoa butter substitutes. Cocoa butter substitutes are often characterized as "lauric" or "non-lauric", depending on the chemical nature of the component fats. Most lauric cocoa butter substitutes are based on palm kernel oils. Oil industry suppliers subject palm kernel oils to several processing and modifying steps, such as fractionation, hydrogenation and interesterification, and these fractions and derivatives are further blended together in various proportions to produce cocoa butter substitutes with different properties. Examples of commercial suppliers of these fats are Fuji Vegetable Oil Inc., Aarhus Inc., and Lodders and Crocklaan. These various fats show differences in flavor, texture, bloom stability and processing characteristics.

25 [0005] Cocoa butter is particularly desirable in part because of its unusual melting characteristics. Cocoa butter is a solid at temperatures close to room temperature, but rapidly melts at body temperatures. Thus, unlike most oils or fats, cocoa butter maintains its solid shape at room temperature, around 20°C, but quickly melts as it is warmed in the mouth to temperatures above 30°C. As a result, cocoa butter has a unique and desirable texture and feel in the mouth, which contribute to its wide demand.

30 [0006] Recognizing that the melting characteristics of cocoa butter are desirable, much work has been done to mimic these melting characteristics in substitute fat compositions. Thus, oils can be chemically modified, such as by hydrogenation or interesterification, to modify their melting characteristics and hence increase their similarity to cocoa butter.

35 [0007] For example, U.S. Patent No. 4,902,527 to Galenkamp et al. describes lauric fats which are selectively hydrogenated to provide a trans acid content of at least 25%. These modified fats reportedly show melting and other characteristics resembling those of coconut stearin, a high quality cocoa butter substitute.

40 [0008] Alternatively, oils can be chemically modified so that their triglyceride composition more closely matches that of cocoa butter. Cocoa butter is composed largely of 1,3-disaturated-2-unsaturated triglycerides. Thus, a number of U.S. patents attempt to provide cocoa butter substitutes by controlling the triglyceride composition of the component fats. For example, U.S. Patent No. 4,873,109 to Tanaka et al. discloses cocoa butter substitute compositions containing at least 80% 1,3-disaturated-2-oleoyl glycerols which are up to 10% 1,3-dipalmitoyl-2-oleoyl glycerol, 25-45% 1-palmi-

toyl-2-oleoyl-3-stearoyl glycerol, and 45-70% 1,3-distearoyl-2-oleoyl glycerol.

[0009] Other workers have tried to provide cocoa butter substitutes by blending different oils to produce an oil composition with the desired properties. U.S. Patent No. 4,430,350 to Tressler describes coatings for frozen confections containing an oil blend which can include palm kernel oil. The oil blend contains an interesterified mixture of 75-90% lauric acid or oil (including palm kernel oil) and 10-25% non-lauric oil. Coatings made with these oil blends reportedly show good brittleness, flavor and mouthfeel properties.

[0010] U.S. Patent No. 4,613,514 to Maruzeni et al. discloses a cocoa butter substitute composition obtained by removing as completely as possible the high melting point fraction of a palm oil. The composition thus contains a medium melting point palm oil fraction which, because of the lack of a high melting point component shows very sharp melting characteristics.

[0011] None of these references, however, provides an oil blend having palm kernel stearin, hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, hardened palm or cottonseed oil, and optionally palm kernel oil and hydrogenated palm kernel oil, which is suitable for use as a cocoa butter substitute, well-characterized, and possesses the flavor and texture release properties of cocoa butter.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING FIGURES

[0012]

Figure 1 shows the texture results at 20°C of the Blend Composition #1, Blend Composition #2, and China Chocolate.

Figure 2 shows the texture results at 32°C of the Blend Composition #1, Blend Composition #2, and China Chocolate.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0013] In one embodiment, the present invention relates to palm kernel oil blends having flavor release and texture properties similar to those of cocoa butter. The oil blends include palm kernel oils and mixtures of modified or derivatized palm kernel oils. In particular, the palm kernel oil blends include palm kernel stearin, hardened palm oil or hardened cottonseed oil, hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, and optionally hydrogenated palm kernel oil and palm kernel oil. It has been surprisingly found that oil blends including these components in particular weight percentages provide fat compositions having highly desirable flavor and texture properties similar to cocoa butter. Furthermore, these oil blends provide fat compositions having greater hardness than traditional oil blends.

[0014] The palm kernel oil blends of the present invention include between about 5 to about 60% by weight of palm kernel stearin, between about 20 to about 95% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, and between about 0.2 to about 3% by weight of hardened palm oil or hardened cottonseed oil. The optional components of the oil blends, when present, include between about 5 to about 20% by weight of palm kernel oil and between about 5 to about 20% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel oil. These palm kernel oil components individually are well known and are commercially available from various sources, such as Fuji Vegetable Oil Inc., Aarhus Inc., and Loders and Crocklaan.

[0015] The various oil components of the palm kernel oil blends are miscible. Thus, an oil blend of the present invention can be produced by simple mixing of the components in the proper weight ratios. Preferably, in order to more easily obtain a homogeneous blend, the components are melted and stirred or mixed together.

[0016] In a preferred embodiment, an oil blend of the present invention includes between about 20 to about 40% by weight of palm kernel stearin, between about 55 to about 80% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, and between about 1 to about 2% by weight of hardened palm oil. More preferably, the oil blend includes between about 25 to about 30% by weight of palm kernel stearin, between about 70 to about 80% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, and between about 1 to about 2% by weight of hardened palm oil.

[0017] In another preferred embodiment, an oil blend of the present invention includes between about 45 to about 60% by weight of palm kernel stearin, between about 20 to about 35% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, between about 1 to about 2% by weight of hardened palm oil, between about 8 to about 15% by weight of palm kernel oil, and between about 5 to about 10% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel oil. More preferably, the oil blend includes between about 54 to about 58% by weight of palm kernel stearin, between about 21 to about 25% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, between about 1 to about 2% by weight of hardened palm oil, between about 10 to about 13% by weight of palm kernel oil, and between about 7 to about 9% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel oil.

[0018] The palm kernel oil blends of the present invention possess highly desirable texture, flavor, and hardness properties. Thus, in another embodiment, the invention relates to edible food products which include these palm kernel oil blends. The edible food products that include the palm kernel oil blends are not particularly limited. The food product may be used, for example, in any foodstuff where cocoa butter is used as a replacement therefor. Typical foodstuffs

include confectioneries such as a confectionery center, a confectionery coating, an ice cream coating, a bar, a morsel, a creamer and the like.

[0019] In one embodiment, the food product contains a palm kernel oil blend, the oil blend including by weight: between about 5 to about 60%, preferably between about 20 to about 40%, more preferably between about 25 to about 30% of palm kernel stearin; between about 20 to about 95%, preferably between about 55 to about 80%, more preferably between about 70 to about 80% of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin; and between about 0.2 to about 3%, preferably between about 1 to about 2% of hardened palm oil or hardened cottonseed oil.

[0020] In another embodiment, the food product contains a palm kernel oil blend, the oil blend including by weight: between about 5 to about 60%, preferably between about 45 to about 60%, more preferably between about 54 to about 58% of palm kernel stearin; between about 20 to about 95% by weight, preferably between about 20 to about 35%, more preferably between about 21 to about 25% of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin; between about 0.2 to about 3%, preferably between about 1 to 2% of hardened palm oil or hardened cottonseed oil; between about 5 to about 20%, preferably between about 8 to about 15, more preferably about 10 to 13% of palm kernel oil; and between about 5 to about 20%, preferably between about 5 to 10%, more preferably between about 7 to 9% of hydrogenated palm kernel oil.

[0021] In still another embodiment, the present invention is directed to a chocolate alternative composition containing the palm kernel oil blends of the present invention. The chocolate alternative compositions of the present invention include between about 24 to about 33% and preferably between about 25 to about 30% by weight of a fat component, in the form of the palm kernel oil blends of the invention. The palm kernel oil blend can be any of the palm kernel oil blends described herein. Other components which are preferably contained in the chocolate alternative composition are those which are well known to those of ordinary skill in the art. These additional components include, for example, cocoa powder, various sugars or sugar substitutes, milk powder, emulsifiers, and other components known to one of skill in the art, such as stabilizers, preservatives, flavoring and coloring agents, and the like.

[0022] Particular preferred examples of chocolate alternative compositions according to the invention are given in the Examples.

[0023] Thus, a chocolate alternative composition of the present invention includes, by weight: about 24 to about 33%, preferably about 25 to about 30%, of the palm kernel oil blends described above; about 30 to about 60% sugars; about 2 to about 25% cocoa powder; about 1 to about 20% milk solids; and optionally up to about 0.5% of an emulsifier.

[0024] Within these approximate ranges, preferred amounts and specifically preferred components vary with the nature of the chocolate alternative desired, and are readily determined by one skilled in the art. For example, the specific sugars chosen, and the amount of sugar used, are readily determined by the desired taste and texture of the product. For typical compound coating applications, a preferred sugar is sucrose. The cocoa powder can have from 0 to about 15%, and preferably no more than about 10 or 12%, fat content. At higher fat amounts, the ingredient mixture may undesirably soften. Similarly, the milk powder can be non-fat milk powder, full-fat milk powder, or anything in between, depending on the taste and texture desired. The emulsifier can be any emulsifier suitable for use in food products, and these are well known to those of ordinary skill in the art. For example, typical emulsifiers suitable for use in the chocolate alternative compositions of the present invention include lecithin, polyglycerol polyricineolate (PGPR), sorbitan monostearate (SMS), polysorbate 60, sorbitan tristearate (STS), lactic acid esters (LAE), distilled monoglycerides (DMG), mono-diglyceride (MDG), diacetyl tartaric acid esters of mono-diglycerides (DATEM), and commercially-available emulsifier blends, such as BETTRFLOW™, a blend of monosodium phosphate derivatives of mono- and diglycerides. Mixtures of these emulsifiers are suitable as well. A preferred emulsifier is lecithin. Various other ingredients and additives well known to one skilled in the art can also be added, as desired.

[0025] Thus, the invention described herein encompasses palm kernel oil blends, edible food products containing the palm kernel blends, and chocolate alternative compositions made therefrom. The palm kernel oil blends of the present invention, and the products made from them, provide a desired hardness and highly desirable flavor and texture release properties similar to those of cocoa butter.

[0026] The invention is further defined by reference to the following examples describing in detail certain embodiments and features of the present invention, as well as their utility. The examples are representative and should not be construed to limit the scope of the invention.

EXAMPLES

Example 1: Blend Composition #1

[0027] The following oil blend was prepared:

Palm Kernel Stearin -
28.5% by weight
Hydrogenated Palm Kernel Stearin -

70% by weight
 Hardened Palm Oil -
 1.5% by weight

- 5 Each component was separately heated until completely melted, added into a mixing vessel, and stirred until the mixture was homogeneous. The resulting oil blend was then ready to be added to various food products.

Example 2: Blend Composition #2

- 10 [0028] The following oil blend was prepared:

Palm Kernel Stearin -
 55.8% by weight
 Hydrogenated Palm Kernel Stearin -
 15 23.3% by weight
 Hardened Palm Oil -
 1.5% by weight
 Palm Kernel Oil -
 11.6% by weight
 20 Hydrogenated Palm Kernel Oil -
 7.9% by weight

- [0029] Each component was separately heated until completely melted, added into a mixing vessel, and stirred until the mixture was homogeneous. The resulting oil blend was then ready to be added to food products.

25

Example 3: Chocolate Alternative made with Blend Composition #1

- [0030] A chocolate alternative was made using 28.5% by weight of Palm Kernel Stearin, 70% by weight of Hydrogenated Palm Kernel Stearin, and 1.5% by weight of Hardened Palm Oil. The composition of the chocolate alternative was as follows (% by weight):

30
 35

Sucrose	49.8
Non-Fat Dry Milk	14.6
Cocoa (10-12% fat)	5.1
Blend Composition #1	30.3
Lecithin	0.2

Example 4: Chocolate Alternative made with Blend Composition #2

- 40 [0031] A chocolate alternative was made using 55.8% by weight of Palm Kernel Stearin, 23.3% by weight of Hydrogenated Palm Kernel Stearin, 1.5% by weight of Hardened Palm Oil, 11.6% by weight of Palm Kernel Oil, and 7.9% by weight of Hydrogenated Palm Kernel Oil. The composition of the chocolate alternative was as follows (% by weight):

45

Sucrose	49.8
Non-Fat Dry Milk	14.6
Cocoa (10-12% fat)	5.1
Blend Composition #2	30.3
Lecithin	0.2

- 50 **Example 5: Chocolate Alternative made with Blend Composition #1**

- [0032] A chocolate alternative was made 28.5% by weight of Palm Kernel Stearin, 70% by weight of Hydrogenated Palm Kernel Stearin, and 1.5% by weight of Hardened Palm Oil. The composition of the chocolate alternative was as follows (% by weight):

55

Sucrose	53.5
Cocoa (0% fat)	17.7
Blend Composition #1	28.7

Lecithin 0.1

Example 6: Chocolate Alternative made with Blend Composition #2

- 5 [0033] A chocolate alternative was made using 55.8% by weight of Palm Kernel Stearin, 23.3% by weight of Hydrogenated Palm Kernel Stearin, 1.5% by weight of Hardened Palm Oil, 11.6% by weight of Palm Kernel Oil, and 7.9% by weight of Hydrogenated Palm Kernel Oil. The composition of the chocolate alternative was as follows (% by weight):

10 Sucrose 53.5
Cocoa (0% fat) 17.7
Blend Composition #2 28.7
Lecithin 0.1

15 Example 7: Texture Measurement of Chocolate Alternative Made With Blend Composition #1 and Blend Composition #2

- [0034] In this Example, texture measurements were made for the chocolate alternatives made using the chocolate alternative described in Example 3 having (by weight percent) 49.8% sucrose, 14.6% non-fat dry milk, 5.1% cocoa (10-12% fat), 30.0% Blend Composition #1, as described in Example 1, and 0.2% lecithin; and the chocolate alternative described in Example 4 having (by weight percent) 49.8% sucrose, 14.6% non-fat dry milk, 5.1% cocoa (10-12% fat), 30.0% Blend Composition #2, as described in Example 2, and 0.2% lecithin. The measurements were made with a TA-XT2 texture analyzer (Texture Technologies Corp., New York) equipped with XTRAD software.

- [0035] The texture of the Blend Composition-based chocolate alternatives was compared to the texture of a representative chocolate, China Chocolate (Nestlé). Each sample was formed into pieces of dimension 37 x 19 x 6 mm by melting the sample and cooling it in a mold. These pieces were then supported on a hollow testing surface. A 2 mm diameter punch probe (TA-52) was used for the test. A pre-test speed of 5 mm/s, followed by a test speed of 1 mm/s was used. The probe penetrated to a depth of 5 mm, with a force threshold of 0.05 N, and returned to its original position at a rate of 10 mm/s.

- [0036] The hardness of the coatings were studied at 20°C, 32°C, and 35°C, and the methods are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

TA-XT2 Method For Analysis of Coating Hardness.		
TA Setting	Test Method at 20°C	Test Method at 32°C and 35°C
Pre-test Speed	3 mm/sec	3 mm/sec
Test Speed	1.0 mm/sec	0.1 mm/sec
Post-test Speed	4 mm/sec	4 mm/sec
Depth	2 mm	2 mm
Trigger Force	10 g	6 g
Probe	TA-52 punch probe	TA-55 punch probe
Attribute analyzed	Maximum Force	Maximum Force

50 a) Texture Results at 20°C

- [0037] Figure 1 and Table 2 show the texture results at 20°C of the Blend Composition #1, Blend Composition #2, and China Chocolate. Each data curve in Figure 1 is an average of four measurements (CV<10%). The point of inflection on the graph and the maximum force indicates the hardness of the coating/chocolate. The Blend Composition #1 is much harder than the China Chocolate or the Blend Composition #2 at 20°C.

Table 2

Texture Results of Blend Composition #1, Blend Composition #2, and China Chocolate at 20°C	
Sample	Hardness (force in g)
China Chocolate	2370
Blend Composition #1	2965
Blend Composition #2	2314

b) Texture Results at 32°C and 35°C

[0038] Figure 2 and Table 3 show the texture results at 32°C of the Blend Composition #1, Blend Composition #2, and China Chocolate. Each data curve in Figure 2 is an average of four measurements (CV<10%). The point of inflection on the graph and the maximum force indicates the hardness of the coating/chocolate. The shape retention property of Blend Composition #1 (maximum force = 39g) is much higher compared to the China Chocolate (maximum force = 16.2g) or the Blend Composition #2 (maximum force = 6.4g).

[0039] At 35°C, each of the samples melted.

Table 3

Texture Results of Blend Composition #1, Blend Composition #2, and China Chocolate at 32°C.	
Sample	Hardness (force in g)
China Chocolate	16.2
Blend Composition #1	39.0
Blend Composition #2	6.4

[0040] The invention described and claimed herein is not to be limited in scope by the specific embodiments herein disclosed, since these embodiments are intended as illustrations of several aspects of the invention. Any equivalent embodiments are intended to be within the scope of this invention. Indeed, various modifications of the invention in addition to those shown and described herein will become apparent to those of ordinary skilled in the art from the foregoing description. Such modifications are also intended to fall within the scope of the appended claims.

[0041] All references cited in the present application are incorporated by reference in their entirety.

Claims

1. An oil blend comprising between about 5 to about 60% by weight of palm kernel stearin, between about 20 to about 95% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, and between about 0.2 to about 3% by weight of hardened palm oil or hardened cottonseed oil.
2. An oil blend according to claim 1 comprising in addition between about 5 to about 20% by weight of palm kernel oil and between about 5 to about 20% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel oil.
3. An oil blend according to claim 1 comprising between about 20 to about 40% by weight of palm kernel stearin, between about 55 to about 80% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, and between about 1 to about 2% by weight of hardened palm oil.
4. An oil blend according to claim 3 comprising between about 25 to about 30% by weight of palm kernel stearin, between about 70 to about 80% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, and between about 1 to about 2% by weight of hardened palm oil.

5. An oil blend according to claim 1 comprising between about 45 to about 60% by weight of palm kernel stearin, between about 20 to about 35% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, between about 1 to about 2% by weight of hardened palm oil, between about 8 to about 15% by weight of palm kernel oil, and between about 5 to about 10% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel oil.
6. An oil blend according to claim 5 comprising between about 54 to about 58% by weight of palm kernel stearin, between about 21 to about 25% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin, between about 1 to about 2% by weight of hardened palm oil, between about 10 to about 13% by weight of palm kernel oil, and between about 7 to about 9% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel oil.
7. An edible food product comprising an oil blend according to claim 1.
8. An edible food product according to claim 7 which is a confectionery center, a confectionery coating, an ice cream coating, a bar, a morsel, or a creamer.
9. An edible food product according to claim 7 which comprises a palm kernel oil blend, the oil blend including by weight: between about 5 to about 60% of palm kernel stearin; between about 20 to about 95% of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin; and between about 0.2 to about 3%, preferably between about 1 to about 2% of hardened palm oil or hardened cottonseed oil.
10. An edible food product according to claim 7 which comprises a palm kernel oil blend, the oil blend including by weight: between about 5 to about 60% of palm kernel stearin; between about 20 to about 95% by weight of hydrogenated palm kernel stearin; between about 0.2 to about 3% of hardened palm oil or hardened cottonseed oil; between about 5 to about 20% of palm kernel oil; and between about 5 to about 20% of hydrogenated palm kernel oil.
11. A chocolate alternative composition comprising between about 24 to about 33% by weight of a fat component, in the form of the palm kernel oil blends according to claim 1.
12. A chocolate alternative composition according to claim 11 containing additionally cocoa powder, various sugars or sugar substitutes, milk powder, emulsifiers, stabilizers, preservatives, flavoring agents or coloring agents.
13. A chocolate alternative composition according to claim 11 comprising by weight about 24 to about 33% of the palm kernel oil blends according to claim 1, about 30 to about 60% sugars; about 2 to about 25% cocoa powder; about 1 to about 20% milk solids; and optionally up to about 0.5% of an emulsifier.
14. An edible food product comprising the chocolate alternative composition of claim 13.
15. The edible food product of claim 14 which is a confectionery center, a confectionery coating, an ice cream coating, a bar, a morsel, or a creamer.

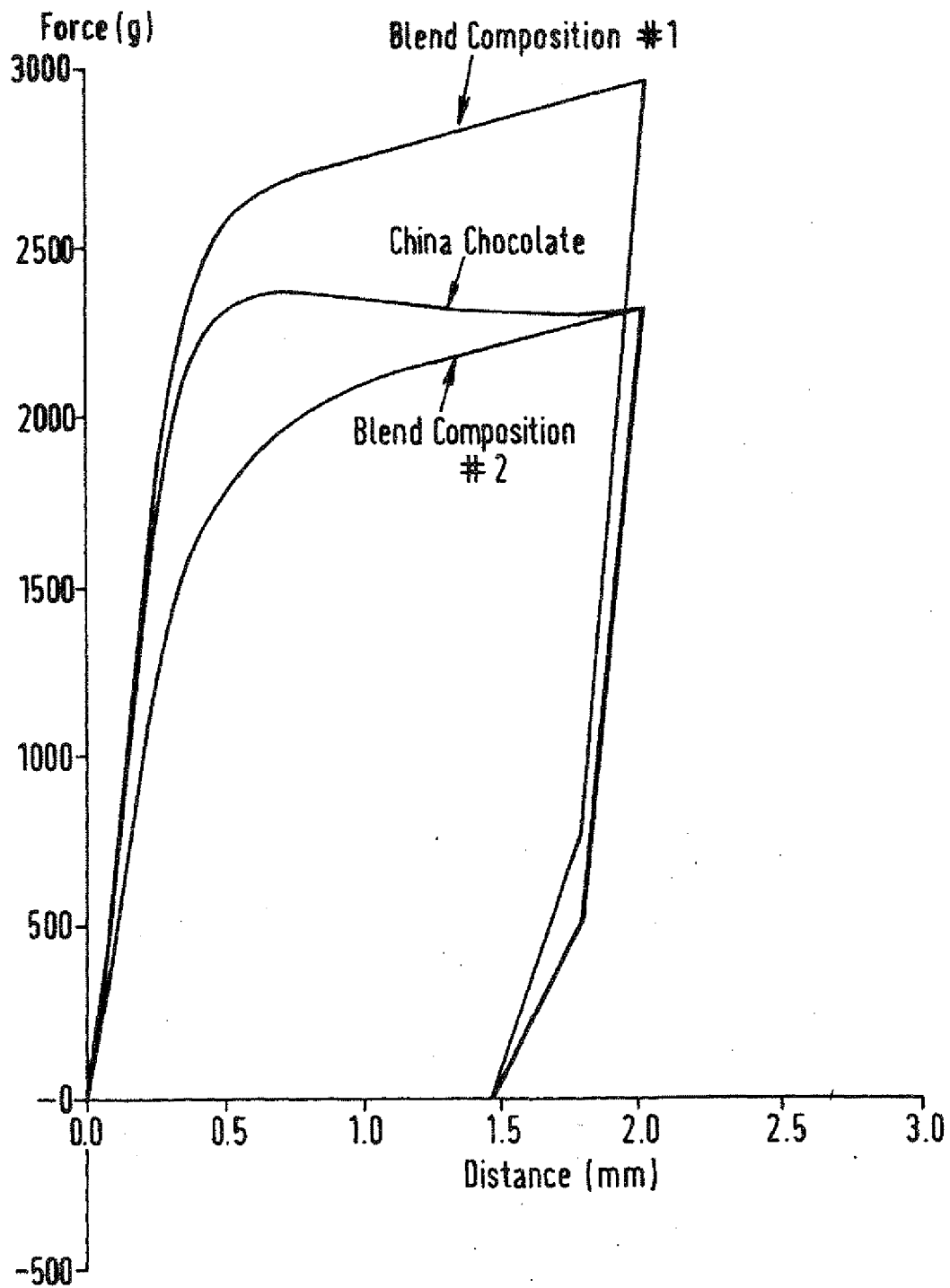


FIG. 1: TA-XT2 TEXTURE RESULTS AT 20°C

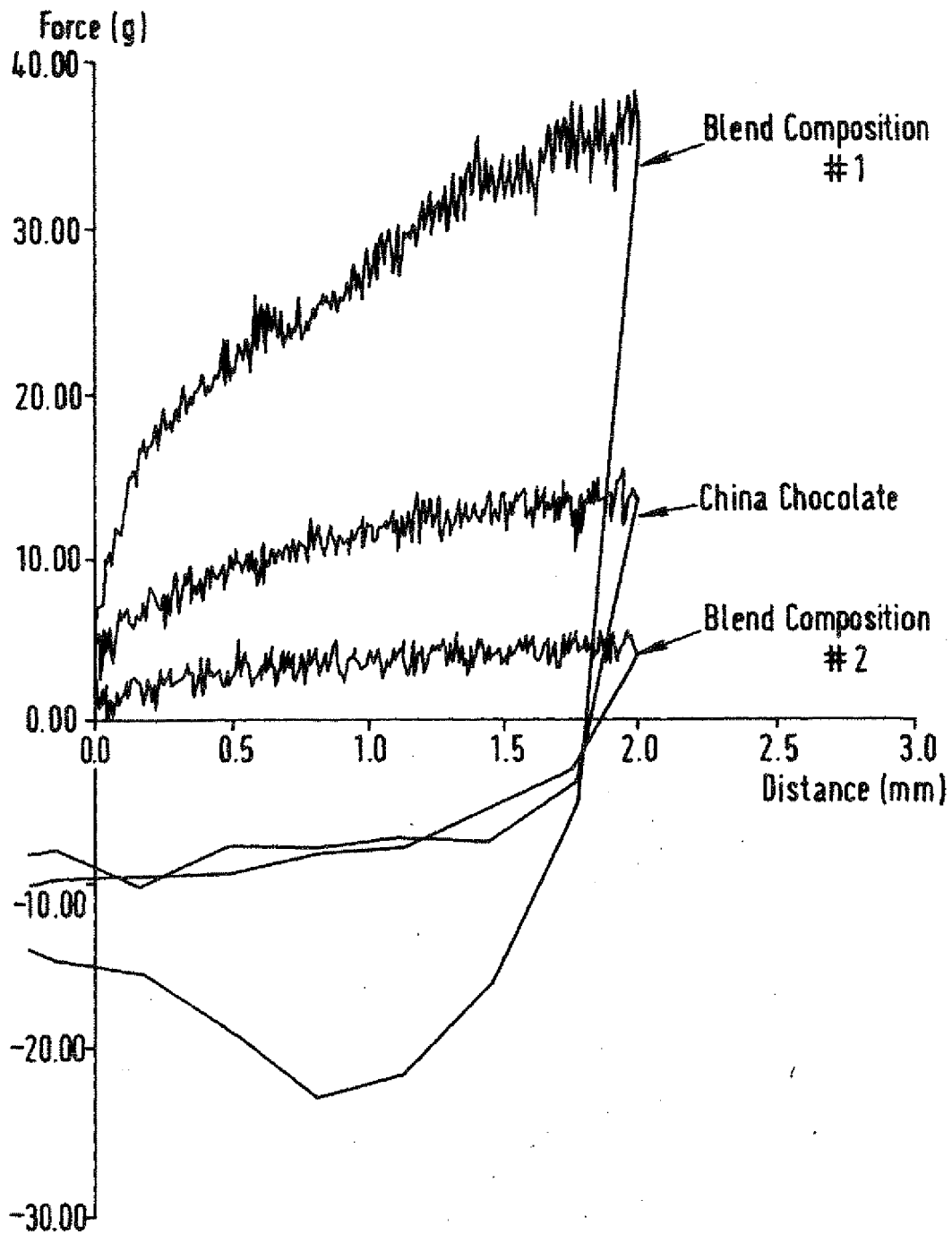


FIG.2 :TA-Xt2 TEXTURE RESULTS AT 32°C



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 00 10 0861

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-/-			
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 2 March 2000	Examiner Tallgren, A
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons @ : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

EP 0 FORM 1833 (04/01)



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
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			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (InCL7)
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 2 March 2000	Examiner Tallgren, A
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background D : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

EPO FORM 1503 (03/02) (P44001)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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EP 00 10 0861

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

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